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A CANADIAN CALENDAR: XII LYRICS

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To
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XII. LYRICS: A LIST.

. IN THE NORTH.
I. A ROAD SONG IN MAY.
II. THE LANDSMAN.
V. THE GHOST.
. A SONG IN AUGUST.
I. TO AUTUMN.
II. THREE GREY DAYS.
III. THE WATCH.
I. THE SEEKERS.
. FELLOWSHIP.
I. THE LODGER.
II. MARCH WIND.

I. *IN*

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I. *IN THE NORTH.*

Come, let us go and be glad again together
Where of old our eyes were opened and we knew that we were free!
Come, for it is April, and her hands have loosed the tether
That has bound for long her children,—who her children more than we?

Hark! hear you not how the strong waters thunder
Down through the alders with the word they have to bring?
Even now they win the meadow and the withered turf is under,
And, above, the willows quiver with foreknowledge of the spring.

Yea, they come, and joy in coming; for the giant hills have sent them,—
The hills that guard the portal where the South has built her throne;
Unloitering their course is,—can wayside pools content them,
Who were born where old pine forests for the sea forever moan?

And they, behind the hills, where forever bloom the flowers,
Do they ever know the worship of the re-arisen Earth?
Do their hands ever clasp such a happiness as ours,
Now the waters foam about us and the grasses have their birth?

Fair is their land,—yea fair beyond all dreaming,—
With its sun upon the roses and its long summer day;
Yet surely they must envy us our vision of the gleaming
Of our lady's white throat as she comes her ancient way.

For their year is never April—Oh, what were Time without her!
Yea, the drifted snows may cover us, yet shall we not complain;
Knowing well our Lady April—all her raiment blown about her—
Will return with many kisses for our unremembered pain!

I. *A ROAD SONG IN MAY.*

come! Is it not surely May?
he year is at its poise today.
orthward, I hear the distant beat
f Spring's irrevocable feet:
omorrow June will have her way.

O tawny waters, flecked with sun,
Come; for your labours all are done.
The grey snow fadeth from the hills;
And toward the sound of waking mills
Swing the brown rafts in, one by one.

O bees among the willow-blooms,
Forget your empty waxen rooms
Awhile, and share our golden hours'
Will they not come, the later flowers,
With their old colours and perfumes?

O wind that bloweth from the west,
Is not this morning road the best?
—Let us go hand in hand, as free
And glad as little children be
That follow some long-dreamed-of quest!

III. *THE LANDSMAN.*

"It well may be just as you say,
Will Carver, that your tales are true;
Yet think what I must put away,
Will Carver, if sail with you."

"If you should sail with me (the wind
Is west, the tide's at full, my men!)
The things that you have left behind
Will be as nothing to you then."

"Inland, it's June! And birds sing
Among the wooded hills, I know;
Between green fields, unhastening,
The Nashwaak's shadowed waters flow.

"What know you of such things as these
Who have the grey sea at your door,—
Whose path is as the strong winds please
Beyond this narrow strip of shore?"

"*Your* fields and woods! Now, answer me:

Up what green path have your feet run
So wide as mine, when the deep sea
Lies all-uncovered to the sun?

And down the hollows of what hills
Have you gone—half so glad of heart
As you shall be when our sail fills
And the great waves ride far apart?"

"O! half your life is good to live,
Will Carver; yet, if I should go,
What are the things that you can give
Lest I regret the things I know!

"Lest I desire the old life's way?
The noises of the crowded town?
The busy streets, where, night and day,
The traffickers go up and down?"

"What can I give for these? Alas,
That all unchanged your path must be!
Strange lights shall open as we pass
And alien wakes traverse the sea:

"Your ears shall hear (across your sleep)
New hails, remote, disquieted,
For not a hand-breadth of the deep
But has to soothe some restless dead.

"These things shall be. And other things,
I think, not quite so sad as these!
—Know you the song the rigging sings
When up the opal-tinted seas

"The slow south-wind comes amorously?
The sudden gleam of some far sail
Going the same glad way as we,
Hastily, lest the good wind fail?

"The dreams that come (so strange, so fair!)
When all your world lies well within
The moving magic circle where
The sea ends and the skies begin?".....

....."What port is that, so far astern,
Will Carver? And how many miles
Shall we have run are the tide turn?
—And is it far to the farthest isles?"

IV. *THE GHOST.*

Just where the field becomes the wood
I thought I saw again
Her old remembered face—made grey
As it had known the rain.

The trees grow thickly there; no place
Has half so many trees;
And hunted things elude one there
Like ancient memories.

The path itself is hard to find,
And slopes up suddenly;
—In the old days it was a path
None knew so well as we.

The path slopes upward, till it leaves
The great trees far behind;
—I met her once where the slender birch
Grow up to meet the wind.

Where the poplars quiver endlessly
And the falling leaves are grey,
I saw her come, and I was glad
That she had learned the way.

She paused a moment where the path
Grew sunlighted and broad;
Within her hair slept all the gold
Of all the golden-rod.

And then the wood closed in on her,
And my hand found her hand;
She had no words to say, yet I
Was quick to understand.

I dared to look in her two eyes;
They too, I thought, were grey:
But no sun shone, and all around
Great, quiet shadows lay.

Yet, as I looked, I surely knew
That they knew nought of tears,—
But this was very long ago,
—A year, perhaps ten years.

All this was long ago. Today,
Her hand met not with mine;
And where the pathway widened out
I saw no gold hair shine.

I had a weary, fruitless search.
—I think that her wan face
Was but the face of one asleep
Who dreams she knew this place.

V. *A SONG IN AUGUST.*

O gold is the West and gold the river-waters
Washing past the sides of my yellow birch canoe.
Gold are the great drops that fall from my paddle,
The far-off hills cry a golden word of you.

I can almost see you! Where its own shadow
Creeps down the hill's side, gradual and slow,
There you stand waiting; the goldenrod and thistle
Glad of you beside them—the fairest thing they know.

Down the worn foot-path, the tufted pines behind you,
Grey sheep between,—unfrightened as you pass;
Swift through the sun-glow, I to my loved one
Come, striving hard against the long trailing grass.

Soon shall I ground on the shining gravel-reaches;
Through the thick alders you will break your way;
Then your hand in mine, and our path is on the waters,—
For us the long shadows and the end of day.

Whither shall we go? See, over to the westward,
An hour of precious gold standeth still for you and me;
Still gleams the grain, all yellow on the uplands;
West is it, or East, O Love that you would be?

West now, or East? For, underneath the moonrise,
Also it is fair; and where the reeds are tall,
And the only little noise is the sound of quiet waters,
Heavy, like the rain, we shall hear the duck-oats fall.

And perhaps we shall see, rising slowly from the driftwood,
A lone crane go over to its inland nest;
Or a dark line of ducks will come in across the islands
And sail overhead to the marshes of the west.

Now a little wind rises up for our returning;
Silver grows the East as the West grows grey;
Shadows on the waters, shaded are the meadows,
The firs on the hillside—naught so dark as they.

Yet we have known the light!—Was ever such an August?
Your hand leave mine; and the new stars gleam
As we separately go to our dreams of opened heaven,—
The golden dawn shall tell you that you did not dream.

VI. *TO AUTUMN.*

How shall I greet thee, Autumn? with loud praise
And joyous song and wild, tumultuous laughter?
Or unrestrained tears?
Shall I behold only the scarlet haze
Of these thy days
That come to crown this best of all the years?
Or shall I hear, even now, those sad hours chime—
Those unborn hours that surely follow after
The shedding of thy last-relinquished leaf—
Till I, too, learn the strength and change of time
Who am made one with grief?

For now thou comest not as thou of old
Wast wont to come; and now mine old desire

Is sated not at all
With sunset-visions of thy splendid gold
Or fold on fold
Of the stained clouds thou hast for coronal.
Still all these ways and things are thine, and still
Before thine altar burneth the ancient fire;
The blackness of the pines is still the same,
And the same peace broodeth behind the hill
Where the old maples flame.

I, counting these, behold no change; and yet,
To-day, I deem, they know not me for lover,
Nor live because of me.
And yesterday, was it not thou I met,
Thy warm lips wet
And purpled with wild grapes crushed wantonly,
And yellow wind-swept wheat bound round thy hair,
Thy brown breast half set free and half draped over
With long green leaves of corn? Was it not thou,
Thy feet unsandaled, and thy shoulders bare
As the gleaned fields are now?

Yea, Autumn, it was thou, and glad was I
To meet thee and caress thee for an hour
And fancy I was thine;
For then I had not learned all things must die
Under the sky,—
That everywhere (a flaw in the design!)
Decay crept in, unquickening the mass,—
Creed, empire, man-at-arms, or stone, or flower.
In my unwisdom then, I had not read
The message writ across Earth's face, alas,
But scanned the sun instead.

For all men sow; and then it happeneth—
When harvest time is come, and thou art season—
Each goeth forth to reap.
"This cometh unto him" (perchance one saith)
"Who laboreth:
This is my wage: I will lie down and sleep."—
He maketh no oblation unto Earth.

Another, in his heart divine unreason,
Seeing his fields lie barren in the sun,
Crieth, "O fool! Behold the little worth
Of that thy toil hath won!"

And so one sleepeth, dreaming of no prayer;
And so one lieth sleepless, till thou comest
To bid his cursing cease;
Then, in his dreams, envieth the other's share.
Whilst, otherwhere,
Thou showest still thy perfect face of peace,
O Autumn, unto men of alien lands!
Along their paths a little while thou roamest,
A little while they deem thee queenliest,
And good the laying-on of thy warm hands, —
And then, they, too, would rest.

They, too, would only rest, forgetting thee!
But I, who am grown the wiser for thy loving,
Never may thee deny!
And when the last child hath forsaken me,
And quietly
Men go about the house wherein I lie,
I shall be glad, feeling across my face
Thy damp and clinging hair, and thy hands moving
To find my wasted hands that wait for thine
Beneath white cloths; and, for one whisper's space,
Autumn, thy lips on mine!

VII. *THREE GRAY DAYS.*

If she would come, now, and say, *What will you Lover?*—
She who has the fairest gifts of all the earth to give—
Think you I should ask some tremendous thing to prove her,
Her life, say, and all her love, so long as she might live?.....
Should I touch her hair? her hands? her garments, even?
Nay! for such rewards the gods their own good time have set!
Once, these were *all* mine; the least, poor one was heaven:
Now, lest she remember, I pray that she forget.

Merely should I ask—ah! she would not refuse them
Who still seems very kind when I meet with her in dreams—
Only three of our old days, and—should she help to choose them
Would the first not be in April, beside the sudden streams?.....
Once, upon a morning, up the path that we had taken.
We saw Spring come where the willow-buds are grey;
Heard the high hills, as with tread of armies, shaken;
Felt the strong sun—O, the glory of that day!

And then—what? one afternoon of quiet summer weather!
O, woodlands and meadow-lands along the blue St. John,
My birch finds a path—though your rafts lie close together
Then O! what starry miles before the grey o'the dawn?..... .....
I have met the new day, among the misty islands,
Come with whine of saw-mills and whirr of hidden wings,
Gleam of dewy cobwebs, smell of grassy highlands,—
Ah! the blood grows young again thinking of these things.

Then, last and best of all! Though all else were found hollow
Would Time not send a little space, before the Autumn's close,
And lead us up the road—the old road we used to follow
Among the sunset hills till the Hunter's Moon arose?.....
Then, Home through the poplar-wood! damp across our faces
The grey leaves that fall, the moths that flutter by:
Yea! this for me, now, of all old hours and places,
To keep when I am dead, Time, until she come to die.

VIII. *THE WATCH.*

Are those her feet at last upon the stair?
Her trailing garments echoing there?
The falling of her hair?

About a year ago I heard her come,
Thus; as a child recalling some
Vague memories of home.

O how the firelight blinded her dear eyes!
I saw them open, and grow wise:
No questions, no replies.

And now, tonight, comes the same sound of rain.
The wet boughs reach against the pane
In the same way, again.

In the old way I hear the moaning wind
Hunt the dead leaves it cannot find,—
Blind as the stars are blind.

—She may come in at midnight, tired and wan.
Yet,—what if once again at dawn
I wake to find her gone?

IX. *THE SEEKERS.*

Is it very long ago things were as they are
Now? or was it ever? or is it to be?
Was it up this road we came, glad the end was far?
Taking comfort each of each, singing cheerily?

O, the way was good to tread! Up hill and down:
Past the quiet forestlands, by the grassy plains;
Here a stony wilderness, there an ancient town,
Now the high sun over us, now the driving rains.

Strange and evil things we met—but what cared we,
Strong men and unafraid, ripe for any chance?
Battles by the countless score, red blood running free—
Soon we learned that all of these were our inheritance.

Some of us there were that fell: what was that to us?
They were weak—we were strong—health we held to yet:
Pleasant graves we digged them, we the valorous,—
Then to the road again, striving to forget.

Once again upon the road! The seasons passed us by—
Blood-root and mayflowers, grasses straight and tall,
Scarlet banners on the hills, snowdrifts white and high,—
One by one we lived them through, giving thanks for all.

O, the countries that we found in our wandering!
Wide seas without a sail, islands fringed with foam,

Undiscovered till we came, waiting for their king,—
We might tarry but a while, far away from home.

Far away the home we sought,—soon we must be gone.
The old road, the old days, still we clung to those;
The dawn came, the noon came, the dusk came, the dawn—
Still we kept upon this path long ago we chose.

.....

Was it up this road we came, glad the end was far,
Yesterday,—last year—a million years ago?
Surely it was morning then: now, the twilight star
Hangs above the hidden hills—white and very low.

Quietly the Earth takes on the hush of things asleep;
All the silence of the birds stills the moveless air;
Yet we must not falter now, though the way be steep:
Just beyond the turn o'the road,—surely Peace is there!

X. *FELLOWSHIP.*

1.

At last we reached the pointed firs
And rested for a little while;
The light of home was in her smile
And my cold hand grew warm as her's.

Behind, across the level snow,
We saw the half-moon touch the hill
Where we had felt the sunset; still
Our feet had many miles to go.

And now, new little stars were born
In the dark hollows of the sky;—
Perhaps (she said) lest we should die
Of weariness before the morn.

2.

Once, when the year stood still at June,
At even we had tarried there

Till Dusk came in—her noiseless hair
Trailing along a pathway strewn

With broken cones and year—old things.
But now, tonight, it seemed that She
Therein abode continually,
With weighted feet and folded wings.

And so we lingered not for dawn
To mark the edges of our path;
But with such hope a blind man loth
At midnight, we went groping on.

—I do not know how many firs
We stumbled past in that still wood:
Only I know that once we stood
Together there—my lips on her's.

3.

Between the midnight and the dawn
We came out on the farther side;
—What if the wood *was* dark and wide?
Its shadows now here far withdrawn.

And O the white stars in the sky!
And O the glitter of the snow!—
Henceforth we know our feet should know
Fair ways to travel—she and I—

For One—Whose shadow is the Night—
Unwound them where the Great Bear swung
And wide across the darkness flung
The ribbons of the Northern Light.

XI. *THE LODGER.*

What! and do you find it good,
Sitting here alone with me?
Hark! the wind goes through the wood
And the snow drifts heavily.

When the morning brings the light
How know I you will not say,
"What a storm there fell last night,
Is the next ina far away?"

How know I you do not dream
Of some country where the grass
Grows up tall around the gleam
Of the milestones you must pass?

Even now perhaps you tell
(While your hands play through my hair)
Every hill, each hidden well,
All the pleasant valleys there,

That before a clear moon shines
You will be with them again?
Hear the booming of the pines
And the sleet against the pane.

2

Wake, and look upon the sun.
I awoke an hour ago,
When the night was hardly done
And still fell a little snow.

Since the hill-tops touched the light
Many things have my hands made,
Just that you should think them right
And be glad that you have stayed.

—How I worked the while you slept!
Scarcely did I dare to sing!
All my soul a silence kept—
Fearing your awakening.

Now, indeed, I do not care
If you wake; for now the sun
Makes the least of all things fair
That my poor two hands have done.

No, it is not hard to find.
You will know it by the hills—
Seven—sloping up behind;
By the soft perfume that fills

(O, the red, red roses there!)
Full the narrow path thereto;
By the dark pine-forest where
Such a little wind breathes through;

By the way the bend o' the stream
Takes the peace that twilight brings:
By the sunset, and the gleam
Of uncounted swallows' wings.

—No, indeed, I have not been
There; but such dreams I have had!
And, when I grow old, the green
Leaves will hide me, too, made glad.

Yes, you must go now, I know.
You are sure you understand?
—How I wish that I could go
Now, and lead you by the hand.

XII. *MARCH WIND.*

High above the trees, swinging in across the hills,
There's a wide cloud, ominous and slow;
And the wind that rushes over sends the little stars to cover
And the wavering shadows fade along the snow.
Surely on my window (Hark the tumult of the night!)
That's a first, fitful drop of scanty rain;
And the hillside wakes and quivers with the strength of newborn rivers
Come to make our Northland glad and free again.

O remember how the snow fell the long winter through!
Was it yesterday I tied your snowshoes on?

All my soul grew wild with yearning for the sight of you returning
But I waited all those hours that you were gone.
For I watched you from our window through the blurring flakes that fell
Till you gained the quiet wood, and then I knew
(When our pathways lay together how we revelled in such weather!)
That the ancient things I loved would comfort you.

Now I knew that you would tarry in the shadow of the firs
And remember many winters overpast;
All the hidden signs I found you of the hiding life around you,
Sleeping patient till the year should wake at last.
Here a tuft of fern underneath the rounded drift;
A rock, there, behind a covered spring;
And here, nowhither tending, tracks beginning not nor ending,—
Was it bird or shy four-footed furry thing?

And remember how we followed down the woodman's winding trail!
By the axe-strokes ringing louder, one by one,
Well we knew that we were nearing now the edges of the clearing,—
O the gleam of chips all yellow in the sun!
But the twilight fell about us as we watched him at his work;
And in the south a sudden moon, hung low,
Beckoned us beyond the shadows—down the hill—across the meadows
Where our little house loomed dark against the snow.

And that night, too—remember?—outside our quiet house,
Just before the dawn we heard the moaning wind;
Only then its wings were weighted with the storm itself created
And it hid the very things it came to find.
In the morn, when we arose, and looked out across the fields,
(Hark the branches! how they shatter overhead!)
Seemed it not that Time was sleeping, and the whole wide world was keeping
All the silence of the Houses of the dead?

Ah, but that was long ago! And tonight the wind foretells
(Hark, above the wind, the little laughing rills!)
Earth's forgetfulness of sorrow when the dawn shall break tomorrow
And lead me to the bases of the hills:
To the low southern hills where of old we used to go—
(Hark the rumour of ten thousand ancient Springs!)
O my love, to thy dark quiet—far beyond our North's mad riot—
Do thy new Gods bring remembrance of such things?

A Canadian Calendar: XII Lyrics written by Francis Sherman and privately printed in Havana is issued at Christmastide M. C. M.